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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000784

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [SCUL](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: CUBAN PARTICIPATION IN THE PRESIDENT'S EDUCATION  
INITIATIVE FOR WHA: USINT HAVANA RESPONSE

REF: STATE 098793

Classified By: COM Jonathan Farrar for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. ( C ) SUMMARY: USINT Havana appreciates WHA and ECA support for Cuba's participation in Partnership for Latin American Youth (PLAY) programs. We believe that such programs would be very well received among Cubans. We are not sanguine about the likelihood of the GOC standing aside to allow the programs to proceed unfettered, but we further believe that we should not be deterred by official opposition. We propose to employ all public diplomacy assets available to us to make the Cuban public aware of the existence of these programs and the procedures for applying for them. If the GOC moves to block participation in our programs, so be it, but we must be sure that if no clear resistance from the GOC develops, those who apply are able to participate promptly. END SUMMARY

12. ( C ) The following are our views on the viability of the specific programs outlined in reftel:

1A. Community College Initiative: This would be the most ideal candidate for Cuba as it comes closest to addressing youth career interests. At least initially, we believe the numbers could be kept modest (say, for example 4-6 students) in order to create some success stories. USINT proposes to recruit by means such as our USINT website, Radio and TV Marti--even our electronic billboard--as well as word of-mouth through the existing network of Cuban youth that has been the target of our outreach efforts in the past couple of years. While our contacts in this area are comparatively limited at the moment, they likely would grow as word spread about the existence of this program. We believe English-language training would be necessary for all participants. The biggest challenge will be securing exit visas from the GOC once it ascertains the program's funding sources and objectives.

1B. Undergraduate Student Leader Institutes: This program also is a good option for the same reasons outlined in (A) above. It will likely have greatest success if conducted in Spanish. We are not sure that an intensive English-language training component would be cost effective for a program lasting only six weeks, but if pursued, this would obviously expand interest among the applicants and available options. Once again, exit visas would be the biggest challenge.

1C. Youth Ambassadors: We do not believe this would be a viable program in Cuba at this point due to the requirement for English-language ability and the young ages of the participants. Nonetheless, we could employ the same strategies for advertising the program listed in (A) above and see what develops. On travel and visa issues, in addition to the GOC's requirement to obtain exit visas, there is an additional requirement that parents be authorized by the GOC to allow their minor children to travel.

1D. English Access Micro-Scholarship Program: This would be an excellent program, but cannot be supported in the present

environment due to the nonexistence of any private language schools or NGOs willing to accept U.S. assistance. USINT works closely with and provides regular training to a group of private English teachers who tutor Cuban students on an individual basis, but the infrastructure required by this program does not presently exist. Nevertheless, we would hope to move forward with the program at some point in the future when the environment is more favorable.

1E. N/A

13. ( C ) As reftel acknowledged, there will indeed be a number of challenges to overcome in identifying candidates and providing them with access to these programs, including:

- the difficulty of reaching youth audiences, particularly students at Cuban universities, whose academic careers and future livelihoods (and those of their families) could be jeopardized by participation in U.S.-sponsored exchanges;
- intense GOC efforts to isolate USINT from Cuban academic, intellectual, artistic, and cultural circles,
- the lack of alternatives to state-owned and state-operated educational institutions, including any for the purpose of teaching English;
- insufficient staff in USINT's Public Affairs Section (PAS) if we receive large numbers of applicants.

Offering programs such as those in PLAY could help overcome the first two points as Cubans would likely start coming to us on their own. Thus, the greatest challenge we may face

will be having sufficient resources to manage the applications that come in. Assuming we will not be able to increase staff locally, we would appreciate any support Washington-based offices could provide to review the applications. USINT would do everything in its power to expedite visas for those selected to participate in these programs, but ultimate authority to issue or not rests with Washington.

14. ( C ) Given the GOC's historical objections to any programs initiated or paid for by the United States, coupled with its equally adamant stance against allowing Cuban university students to study elsewhere (and particularly in the U.S.), we are not confident that the GOC will allow Cubans to participate actively in any of these programs. That said, announcing the availability of such opportunities for Cuban youth at a time when despair over their economic futures has led them to eschew long-term study in general, even for formerly prestigious careers, would redound to the U.S.'s favor. We would prefer move forward and then let the GOC choose whether to cast itself as the heavy, forcing it to deny their youth access to programs that would be seen as desirable by most Cubans. As a result, USINT proposes to go all-out to recruit, review, process and promote students for these programs, notwithstanding the likely interference of the Cuban government.

FARRAR